

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1068
ANSWERED ON:05.03.2008
MELTING GLACIERS OF HIMALAYAS
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the glaciers of Himalayas are melting at an alarming pace;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the details of the likely changes in the environment and threats to the ecological system; and
- (d) the effective steps being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS(SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a)&(b) The Government is aware of the melting of the Himalayan glaciers. Compilations of the data on secular movement of glaciers have revealed that the majority of the glaciers of the Himalayan region are passing through a phase of recession, which is a worldwide phenomenon. No abnormal rate of recession has been reported by Geological Survey of India (GSI). Even in the Himalayan region, the rate of recession in different climatic zones is found to be variable on average and in year to year basis. The retreat parameters of 35 glaciers show that 43% of the glaciers in the Himalayan region are retreating in the range of 10 to 20m/yr. The causative factors for this variable retreat may be subnormal snowfall, higher temperature during summer, less severe winter or a combination of all of them. It could also be attributed to the phenomenon of rise in temperature, global warming, a topic which is still under debate.

c) No specific studies have been undertaken with regard to melting glaciers impact on environment and threats to the ecological system.

d) Recession of the glaciers is a process which cannot be checked in absolute terms. The Geological Survey of India has carried out few pilot studies on retardation of ice melting. However, the thick supra-glacial morainic cover on majority of the Himalayan glaciers may not yield desired results. Thus artificial reduction in melting rate may not be possible because of its economic feasibility, scale of operation and pollution hazards.

However, the Government of India has identified the possible measures for reducing the recession of glacier which include conservation activities such as afforestation, removal of garbage, restriction on human interference on glaciers and promotion of sustainable eco-tourism.